HORSESHOE BEND

MAJ. GEN. ANDREW JACKSON TO GOV. WILLIE BLOUNT

"Battle of Tehopiska, or the Horse Shoe"

Ft. Williams, March 31, 1814

His Excellency, Willie Blount, Sir,

I am just returned from the expedition which I advised you in my last I was about to make to the Tallapoosa; and hasten to acquaint you with the good fortune which attended it.

I took up the line of march from this place on the morning of the 24th instant, and having opened a passage of fifty two and a half miles over the ridges which divide the waters of the two rivers, I reached the bend of the Tallapoosa, three miles beyond where I had the engagements of the 22nd January and at the southern extremity of New Youka, on the morning of the 27th. This bend resembles in its curvature that of a horse shoe, and is thence called by that name among the whites. Nature furnishes few situations so eligible for defence; and barbarians have never rendered one more secure by art. Across the neck of land which leads into it from the North, they had erected a breast-work, of greatest compactness and strength – from five to eight feet high, and prepared with double rows of port-holes very artfully arranged. The figure of this wall, manifested no less skill in the projectors of it, than its construction: an army could not approach it without being exposed to a double and cross fire from the enemy who lay in perfect security behind it. The area of this peninsular, thus bounded by the breast-works includes, I conjecture eighty or a hundred acres.

In this bend the warriors from Oakfuskee, Oakchaya, New Youka, Hillabees, the Fish ponds, and Eufaula towns, apprised of our approach, had collected their strength. Their exact number cannot be ascertained; but it is said, by the prisoners we have taken, to have been a thousand. It is certain they were very numerous; and that relying with the utmost confidence upon their strength — their situation, and the assurances of their prophets, they calculated on repulsing us with great ease.

Early on the morning of the 27th having encamped the preceding night at the distance of six miles from them – I detailed Genl. Coffee with the mounted men and nearly the whole of the Indian force, to pass the river at a ford about three miles below their encampment, and to surround the bend in such a manner that none of them should escape by attempting to cross the river. With the remainder of the forces I proceeded along the point of land which leads to the front of the breast-work; and at half past ten oclock A. M. I had planted my artillery on a small eminence, distant from its nearest point about eighty yards, and from its farthest, about two hundred and fifty; from whence I immediately opened a brisk fire upon its centre. With the musketry and rifles I kept up a galling fire whenever the enemy shewed themselves behind their works, or ventured to approach them. This was continued with occasional intermissions, for about two hours, when Capt Russell's company of spies and a part of the Cherokee force, headed by their gallant chieftain, Col. Richard Brown, and conducted by the brave Col. Morgan, crossed over to the extremity of the peninsular in canoes, and set fire to a few of their buildings which

were there situated. They then advanced with great gallantry towards the breast-work, and commenced firing upon the enemy who lay behind it.

Finding that this force notwithstanding the determined bravery they displayed, was wholly insufficient to dislodge the enemy and that General Coffee had secured the opposite banks of the river, I now determined upon taking possession of their works by storm. Never were men better disposed for such an undertaking than those by whom it was to be effected. They had entreated to be lead to the charge with the most pressing importunity, and received the order which was now given, with the strongest demonstration of joy. The effect was such, as this temper of mind foretold. The regular troops, led on by their intrepid and skillful commander Col. Williams, and by the gallant Major Montgomery were presently in possession of the nearer side of the breast-work; and the militia accompanied them in the charge with a vivacity and firmness which could not have been exceeded and has seldom been equalled by troops of any description. A few companies of General Doherty's Brigade on the right were led on with great gallantry by Col. Bunch — the advance guard, by the Adjutant Sitler, and the left extremity of the line by Capt. Gordan of the Spies and Capt. McMurry of Gen'l Johnston's Brigade of West Tennessee Militia.

Having maintained for a few minutes a very obstinate contest, muzzle to muzzle, through the port-holes, in which many of the enemy's balls were welded to the bayonets of our musquets, our troops succeeded in gaining possession of the opposite side of the works. The event could no longer be doubtful. The enemy altho many of them fought to the last with that kind of bravery desperations inspires, were at length entirely routed and cut to pieces. The whole margin of the river which surrounded the peninsular was strewed with the slain. Five hundred and fifty seven were found by officers of great respecability whom I had ordered to count them; besides a very great number who were thrown into the river by their surviving friends, and killed in attempting to pass by General Coffee's men stationed on the opposite banks. Capt. Hammond who with his company of spies occupied a favorable position opposite the upper extremity of the breast-work did great execution and so did Lieu't Bean who had been ordered by Gen'l Coffee to take possession of a small island fronting the lower extremity.

Both officers and men who had the best opportunities of judging, believe the loss of the enemy in killed, not to fall short of eight hundred and if their number was as great as it is represented to have been by the prisoners, and as it is believed to have been by Col. Carrol and other who had a fair view of them as they advanced to the breastworks, their loss must even have been more considerable – as it is quite certain that not more than twenty can have escaped. Among the dead was found their famous prophet Monahee – shot in the mouth by a grape shot; and if Heaven designed to chastise his impostures by an appropriate punishment. Two other prophets were also killed – leaving no others, as I learn, on the Tallapoosa. I lament that two or three women and children were killed by accident. I do not know the exact number of prisoners taken; but it must exceed three hundred, all women and children except three or four.

The battle may be said to have continued with severity for about five hours; but the firing and the slaughter continued until it was suspended by the darkness of the night. The next morning it was resumed and sixteen of the enemy slain who had concealed themselves under the banks.

Our loss was twenty six white men killed and one hundred and seven wounded – Cherokees, eighteen killed, and thirty six wounded, friendly Creeks Five killed and eleven wounded. The loss of Col. Williams' reg't of Regulars is seventeen killed and fifty five wounded; three of whom have since died. Among the former were Major Montgomery, Lieut' Somerville, and Lieut' Moulton, who, fell in the charge which was made on the works. No men ever acted more gallantly, or fell more gloriously.

Of the artillery company, commanded by Capt. Parish, eleven were wounded; one of whom, Sam'l Gaines, has since died; Lieutenants Allen and Ridley were both wounded. The whole company acted with its usual gallantry. Capt. Bradford, of the U.S. Infantry, who acted as chief engineer, and superintended the firing of the cannon, has entitled himself, by his good conduct to my warmest thanks. To say all in a word the whole army who achieved this fortunate victory, have merited by their good conduct, the gratitude of their country. So far as I saw, or could learn there was not an officer or soldier who did not perform his duty with the utmost fidelity. The conduct of the militia on this occasion has gone far towards redeeming the character of that description of troops. They have been as orderly in their encampments and on the line of march, as they have been signally brave in the day of battle.

In a few days I shall take up the line of march for the Hickory Grounds; and have every thing to hope from such troops. Enclosed I send you Gen'l Coffee's Brigade report.

I have the honor to be with great respect,

Your ob't s't Andrew Jackson

Source: <u>Correspondence of Andrew Jackson</u> Vol. 1. pp. 489-492. The original is in the handwriting of Maj. John Reid and was found in a building used by Gov. Willie Blount as an office in Clarksville, Tennessee.

¹ Several words are crossed out in the original which read, "Among the former were Major Montgomery, Lieut Somerville, Lieut Moulton and Capt Reynolds, the three first in the charge which was made on the works; and the last in attempting to oust a party of the enemy who had concealed themselves in the breast work which terminated the lower extremity of the fortification."